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ABSTRACT

A study examined eight best-selling hybrid texts for public speaking or speech communication courses, looking at how each text is organized, what the focus is, which topics are included, how many pages are dedicated to each topic, which pedagogical features are incorporated into each text, and what ancillaries are available with each text. The study's methodology was a descriptive content analysis of the texts. Analysis revealed that, for the most part, these eight texts are highly similar. While four of the texts offer unique chapter topics and while three of the texts provide greater coverage of public speaking essentials, nevertheless, the similarities among texts far outweigh the differences. Pedagogical features are also fundamentally similar. Reviewers may note more distinctive differences, however, when considering the ancillaries available with these texts--especially technological enhancements such as CD-ROMs, Power Point, and Web sites. Future research would do well to focus upon an in-depth analysis of the theories, concepts, philosophical assumptions, and skills found in best-selling textbooks. Moreover, a descriptive study that includes all available textbooks written for the basic hybrid communication course may also add important information to help adopters select textbooks appropriate to their individual courses and institutions. (Contains 4 tables and 7 references.) (NKA)

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A Descriptive Analysis of Best-Selling Basic Course Texts

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Basic hybrid course textbooks remain important to university-level communication education. Notwithstanding the criticism which has attended these texts, especially when viewed as a form of or as a substitute for scholarship (Berger, 1991), basic hybrid course texts represent an important contribution to communication education and continue to proliferate as evidenced by the National Communication Association's listing of 29 texts presently available on the market (http://www.natcom.org). Moreover, given that 30.1% (Morreale, Hanna, Berko & Gibson, 1999) of departments of communication employ a hybrid approach in teaching the basic communication course, hybrid texts possess significant pedagogical impact since textbooks "dictate so much of what goes on at all levels of education" (Rubin, 1999, p.317). Additionally, a recent Review Forum in Communication Education poses the question, "What is the use of a textbook in the basic communication performance course?" as an issue worthy of consideration in the discipline. Nine respondents provide a variety of answers to this question. In example, Worley (1999) identifies "three pedagogical reasons for using texts in a performance-based course: organization, explanation, and application" (p. 323). The presence of such a forum in one of the leading journals in our discipline confirms the importance of how we view and use textbooks in the basic course.

However, selecting a suitable text in view of the particular practical, pedagogical and personal perspectives which attend such a decision remains a challenge for individual instructors, textbook committees or basic course directors. Pelias (1989) notes that criteria for selection include issues such as "content, organization, level of difficulty, and pedagogical approach" as well as the "ratio of theory to practice" and "presentational style" (p. 41). Yoder and Davilla

(1997), in reviewing recent literature, offer other issues, such as content, writing style, approach, and a variety of other specific factors that may also act as criteria for textbook selection. Given the numerous factors adopters must often consider when selecting a hybrid text, the task becomes daunting and time-consuming. To date, little help has been offered to those charged with this decision, although researchers have provided some limited assistance by researching students' versus teachers' perceptions of basic course texts and the content of popular public speaking texts for the basic course (Yoder & Davilla, 1997; Hess & Pearson, 1992). However, given the rate at which both new titles and new editions of basic hybrid textbooks come upon the market, and given that present studies do not offer an analysis of hybrid texts, a descriptive, content analysis of best-selling basic hybrid texts should prove helpful to those who make textbook selections. Therefore, we pose the following research questions for this study:

RQ1: How is each text organized?

RQ2: What is the focus of the text? (What is the relative balance between communication knowledge and skill in each text?)

RQ3: What topics are included in each text?

RQ4: How many pages are dedicated to each topic?

RQ5: What pedagogical features are incorporated into each text?

RQ6: What ancillaries are available with each text?

Method

The eight textbooks analyzed for this study were chosen because publishers who regularly attend the National Communication Association Conference identified these eight texts as their best-selling hybrid texts. While other texts are available, these eight represent, according to publishers'

representatives, their most popular texts. Table 1 lists these eight titles, four of which Morreale et al. (1999) also identify as the most frequently used hybrid texts. The code in the parentheses after each title, which abbreviates the authors' names, is used to reference information in reporting the results.

Table 1

The Best-Selling Basic Hybrid Communication Texts

As Identified By Publishers In Alphabetical Order

Adler, R. & Rodman, G. (1999). Understanding human communication (7th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt-Brace College Publishers. (AR)

Berko, R. M., Wolvin, A. D. & Wolvin, D. R. (1998). Communicating: A social and career focus (7th ed.). New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. (BWW)

Devito, J. (1999). Essentials of human communication (3rd ed). New York: Longman. (D)

O'Hair, D., Friedrich, G. W., Wiemann, J.M. & Wiemann, M.O. (1997). Competent communication (2nd ed.). New York: St. Martins. (OFWW)

Pearson, J. C. & Nelson, P. E. (2000). An introduction to human communication: Understanding and sharing (8th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill. (PN)

Seiler, W. J. & Beall, M. L. (1999). Communication: Making connections. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. (SB)

Yoder, D D., Hugenberg, L. W., & Wallace, S. P. (1996). Creating competent communication (2nd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt. (YHW)

Verderber, R. F. (1999). Communicate! (9th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (V)

Analysis of Texts

These eight texts were analyzed employing basic content analysis. The research questions guided the analysis. Using a coding sheet, each researcher responded to questions about organization, outlined the topics and the flow of these topics in each text, and calculated the number of pages allotted to each topic. Additionally, a matrix with pedagogical characteristics common in basic course texts, as previously identified by Yoder and Davilla (1997), along with characteristics that emerged during content analysis, was used to analyze each text. Researchers also listed the specific ancillaries identified in each text. After each text was analyzed, researchers provided brief narrative summaries of the organization, focus and integration of each text in order to answer RQs 1 and 2. To answer RQs 3 and 4, a matrix (see Table 2) that summarizes topics and the number of pages allotted to each topic was developed. Additionally, the individual matrices that identify the pedagogical characteristics (see Table 3) and available ancillaries (see Table 4) for each text was correlated to provide two summative matrices in order to answer RQs 6 and 7.

Results

Organization and Focus

In this section, we report the organizational approach and focus of each text as explained in the preface of the texts and as derived from content analysis. Understanding Human Communication (1999) by Adler and Rodman does not have a clear organizational theme. Rather, these authors organize the text by human communication contexts. In Chapter One they note the typical contexts of human communication including intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, public speaking and mass media. The book then develops each of these contexts in the above order in the subsequent chapters, although intrapersonal communication is embedded in the explanation of

Perception, The Self and Communication found in Chapter Two. Adler and Rodman (1999) explain that they consider "skills and scholarship as mutually reinforcing" and therefore "information on communication skills is based on solid research and theory" (p. v). In other words, Adler and Rodman equally emphasize both communication knowledge and skills.

Berko et al. (1998) employ a social and career focus in their text, as the title suggests. That is, they emphasize the influence of culture upon human communication and the importance of competent communication in order to engage" the world of work" (p.3). Communication competence, therefore, serves as an underlying theme. The authors focus upon "understandings and skills that are most important to your success as a human being in relational, family, social and career settings" (p. xvi) thereby emphasizing both communication knowledge and skill. The text, however, is organized contextually and features three parts: (a) Foundations of Communication which includes a discussion of personal (intrapersonal) communication in Chapter Two, (b) interpersonal communication and small groups, (c) and public speaking.

Devito (1999) also emphasizes "real world skills" in various types of communication situations without "neglecting the theoretical foundations on which these skills are based" (p. ix). The text uses a contextual approach to discuss the development of communication knowledge and skills. Specifically, Devito emphasizes the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and the development of communication skills by addressing : (a) the Foundation of Human Communication which includes a discussion of the self in communication, and (b) The Contexts of Human Communication which includes discussions of interpersonal and small group communication as well as public speaking. However, folded into this contextual organization are

six elements of communication that Devito identifies as critical themes: (a) skill development, (b) cultural awareness, (c) listening, (d) critical thinking, (e) the importance of power, and (f) ethics.

Pearson and Nelson (1999) organize their text similarly to the previous three texts. These authors also organize their text around human communication contexts and note that the purpose of their text is to increase student's "competence as a communicator" (p. x). However, they do not offer a clear theme around which to organize information. Rather, they identify communication contexts early in the text (see page 16) and list intrapersonal (which they discuss as a part of Chapter Two: Perception, Self-Awareness, and Self-Concept), interpersonal (including dyadic and small group), public and mass communication as contexts that are subsequently considered in the text, although not in this order. In order to emphasize both the sending and receiving roles of communicators, which they identify as fundamental information for students (see p. x), the authors include a discussion of mass communication in concert with their discussion of listening and critical thinking (see Part Two) before moving on to address the remaining contexts which, one may presume, are considered contexts where one primarily sends messages, although the authors do not make this clear distinction. Although Pearson and Nelson do not provide a clear statement of focus for the text, they indicate that students "can apply immediately the ideas" and "practice them for a lifetime" (p. x). These statements indicate that Pearson and Nelson focus upon both "ideas" or communication knowledge and "practice" or skill development.

Competent Communication by O'Hair et al., as suggested by the title, use communication competence to organize their textbook. Specifically, the authors stress knowledge acquisition and skills building as the tools by which one can achieve effective and appropriate communication.

Although competent communication provides the conceptual base for the book, practically, like the texts we have already analyzed in this section, O'Hair et al. organize information by relying upon human communication contexts including interpersonal, small groups, organizational, public speaking and mass communication.

Seiler and Beall, in concert with their title Communication: Making Connections, state clearly, "showing students how to 'make connections' between communication and their daily lives is our overall theme. We believe that communication is all about connecting" (p. xix). The authors employ two sub-themes, technology and social diversity, which they identify as important aspects of making connections. They also note that they emphasize "understanding what it means to be a competent communicator" (p. xxi). Like the previous texts, Seiler and Beall organize information contextually, although they employ a different order than the previous texts. After an introduction to basic human communication processes, the authors discuss public speaking, interpersonal, and then small group communication. They also add an appendix on interviewing. Seiler and Beall note the importance of "an introductory book with content and pedagogy that balances theory, research, and skills" (p. xix) and explain that "any person's capabilities in communication can improve through (1) an understanding of communicative theories and principles, (2) training in its basic principles, and practice." Therefore, according to the authors, this text presents a balance of theory and skill building intended for "college students who are taking an introductory communication course to help them learn about communication principles, public speaking, and interpersonal and group communication" (p. xix).

Yoder et al's. Creating Competent Communication is more skill oriented than the other texts reviewed here. Specifically, the authors notes that their text is "for beginning students who

want to learn skills and strategies for creating competent communication" (vii). For these authors, to become competent communicators students need to be involved with the communication process by recognizing communication content, appropriateness of behavior, flexibility, and satisfaction. The authors orient the text around three themes: (a) the transactional nature of communication in which shared meanings are mutually created by communicators in a given situation, (b) the similarity of skills, or communicative behaviors, needed in various communication situations whether interpersonal, small group or public communication, (c) and the necessity of suitable communication strategies, or planned manipulation of communication skills, in response to specific communication situations.

Verderber's text, Communicate!, like most other texts reviewed here, assumes a contextual approach. After providing foundational communication concepts, the author discusses interpersonal, group and public communication, in turn. Verderber draws upon the concept of communication competence and explains "students reading this book (1) learn to understand the major concepts from communication theory and research, (2) become able to recognize how these concepts and theories provide a basis for communication skills, (3) have access to a range of communication skills, and (4) begin to apply what they learn in class to real-life situations" (p. xv).

Topics

Table 2 summarizes the chapter topics addressed in each text as indicated in the table of contents for each textbook. The texts may differ in the manner in which they address concepts, in how they link concepts together, or in the explanations of these chapter topics. For example, most of the texts discuss critical listening and include information about critical thinking although they do not dedicate an entire chapter to the topic of critical thinking. However, in our analysis, we

focus only upon the presence or absence of specified topic areas. Therefore, in Table 2 we use a "y" for "yes" and an "n" for "no" to indicate whether the texts in question include the specified topic areas. We also include the number of pages as well as the arithmetic average (mean) of pages dedicated to each chapter topic, in Table 2.

Table 2

Topics In Selected Texts and Number of Pages Given to Each Topic

Topics	Texts								
	AR	BWW	D	OFW	PN	SB	YHW	V	Means
Comm theory	Y(26)	Y(25)	Y(29)	Y(28)	Y(21)	Y(26)	Y(19)	Y(21)	24.375
Perception	Y(38)	N	Y(20)	Y(32)	Y(24)	Y(24)	N	Y(24)	20.25
The Self	Y(6)	N	Y(20)	Y(40)	Y(24)	Y(23)	N	N	14.125
Verbal	Y(38)	Y(23)	Y(28)	Y(29)	Y(21)	Y(30)	Y(21)	Y(24)	26.75
Nonverbal	Y(27)	Y(28)	Y(32)	Y(33)	Y(21)	Y(28)	Y(20)	Y(25)	26.75
Listening	Y(33)	Y(22)	Y(20)	Y(32)	Y(31)	Y(22)	Y(21)	Y(29)	26.25
Relational IPC	Y(62)	Y(58)	Y(70)	Y(67)	Y(39)	Y(50)	Y(43)	Y(54)	55.375
Interviewing	Y(26)	Y(29)	Y(24)	Y(34)	Y(19)	Y(23)	Y(17)	Y(15)	23.375
Small Groups	Y(59)	Y(51)	Y(44)	Y(59)	Y(60)	Y(64)	Y(26)	Y(45)	58.375
Family Comm.	N	N	N	N	Y(39)	N	N	N	4.875
Public Speaking Basics	Y(78)	Y(75)	Y(70)	Y(37)	Y(135)	Y(124)	Y(57)	Y(127)	87.875
Informative Speech	Y(21)	Y(19)	Y(28)	Y(38)	Y(25)	Y(28)	Y(16)	Y(25)	25.00
Persuasive Speech	Y(26)	Y(23)	Y(24)	Y(22)	Y(29)	Y(34)	Y(18)	Y(33)	26.125
Mass Media	Y(13)	N	N	Y(20)	N	N	N	N	4.125
Intrapersonal	N	Y(21)	N	N	N	N	N	N	2.625

Intercultural	N	N	N	N	Y(15)	N	N	N	1.875
Communication Competence	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y(17)	N	2.125
Conversations	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y(25)	3.125
Organizational	N	N	N	Y(32)	N	N	N	N	4.00

Pedgogical Characteristics

Table 3 provides a summary of the pedagogical characteristics found in the eight texts in answer to RQ 5.

Table 3

Pedagogical Characteristics of Selected Texts

Texts

Characteristics

	AR	*BWW*	*D*	*OFWW*	*PN*	*SB*	*YHW*	*V*
Cartoons	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
objectives	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
key terms	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
discussion questions	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
references	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
opening scenarios	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
text boxes	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
figures	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
tables	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
bold terms	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
heading levels	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
glossary	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
topical index	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
four color	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
photos	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
exercises	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N
chapter summary	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
suggested readings	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
sample speeches	Y	outline only	Y	?	Y	Y	Y	Y

use of margins	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
examples from students	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Ancillaries

Table 4, in answer to RQ 6, summarizes the ancillaries available with each of the eight texts included in this study.

Table 4

Text Ancillaries

Ancillaries	Texts							
	AR	BWW	D	OFWW	PN	SB	YHW	V
Instructor's Manual/ Test Bank	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y/N	Y
Computerized Testbank	Y	N	Y	Y		Y	N	Y
Student Manual	Y	N	Y*	N		N	N	N
Activities Manual	N	Y	N	N		N	N	N
Feature Film Guide	Y	N	N	N		N	N	N
Powerpoint Slides	Y	Y	N	N		Y	N	Y
Speechmaking Software	Y	Y	N	N		N	N	N
Videos	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	N	N
Transparencies (print)	Y	N	Y	Y		N	N	N
Web Site (print guide)	Y	Y	N	N		Y/Y	N	Y
Grading Software	N	N	N	Y		N	N	N

Games	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
InfoTrac College Edition	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y

**Brainstorms: How to Think More Creatively About Communication or About Anything Else; Studying Communication* (additional books available to students)

Summary

This descriptive analysis reveals that, for the most part, these eight texts are highly similar. While four of the texts offer unique chapter topics and while three of the texts provide greater coverage of public speaking essentials, nevertheless, the similarities among texts far outweigh the differences. The pedagogical features are also fundamentally similar. Reviewers may note more distinctive differences, however, when considering the ancillaries available with these texts especially technological enhancements such as CD Roms, Power Point and Web Sites.

We hope that this descriptive analysis will prove helpful to instructors as they consider textbook adoptions. In order to extend this study, future research would do well to focus upon an in-depth analysis of the theories, concepts, philosophical assumptions and skills found in best-selling textbooks. Moreover, a descriptive study that includes all available textbooks written for the basic hybrid communication course may also add important information to help adopters select textbooks appropriate to their individual courses and institutions.

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